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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Fifty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 549th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 5 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KHORRAM (Islamic Republic of Iran)

later: Mr. MOLANDER (Sweden)

(Vice-Chairman)

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GE.00-03200 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

REPORTS ON THE WORK OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE (agenda item 5)

(a) INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION (continued) (A/AC.96/930)

1. Ms. TAFT (United States of America) said that the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/930) gave a good idea of the current major protection challenges. Her Government believed that, while the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol still served as a good basis and that it was important to ensure their full and inclusive application, new approaches were also needed. Her Government welcomed the proposal to hold global consultations and hoped that they would make it possible to establish dialogue involving Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), refugee protection experts and refugees themselves. The consultations should also recognize that the greatest burden was currently shouldered by the developing countries. With regard to protection itself, she said that individual protection was as important as group protection and it began with identification and registration. She therefore encouraged UNHCR to continue with the methods tried out in Kosovo, based on the application of new technology. However, legal protection meant nothing without physical protection, which meant the presence of sufficient humanitarian workers on the ground, and they should also enjoy a satisfactory level of security. In that regard, the United States supported the draft Executive Committee decision on the safety of UNHCR staff and all other humanitarian personnel and the conclusion of an optional protocol or any other appropriate instrument that would extend the scope of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel to protect all humanitarian workers.

2. Three points deserved UNHCR's close attention: the protection of women and children, and she hoped UNHCR would hold more workshops of the kind recently held on the subject; resettlement, which was the only durable solution; and the establishment of partnerships among States, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs, which was the best way to ensure effectiveness.

3. Mr. PETIT (France) said that he welcomed the global consultations on protection. He emphasized that the main aim of the exercise should be to confirm the central role of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, which were the only consensual instruments on which discussion could be based. The Convention was an integral part of European Union law and the Treaty of Amsterdam referred to it explicitly, stipulating that measures must be taken to harmonize implementation modalities. The Special European Council Summit in Tampere, on justice and internal affairs, had set out to establish a common asylum system that would protect refugee status and therefore detect procedural irregularities used by migrants seeking to abuse that status. To help European Union member States to coordinate efficiently in the proposed global consultations, it would be a good idea for UNHCR to make its voice heard in the competent Community bodies. France saw the consultations as a mutually enriching exercise, but one that should be approached cautiously and under UNHCR's constant supervision, so that the debate could, if necessary, be refocused on the defence of asylum.

4. Mr. GONZALEZ VILLAPAREDES (Venezuela) emphasized the central role of international standards, but also of the conclusions on international protection adopted

periodically by the Executive Committee, which reflected trends and developments in that area and which should be interpreted with appropriate flexibility. The protection of persons in distress was the responsibility of all - UNHCR of course, but also States and NGOs - and it was therefore vital that the various bodies should strengthen their partnership. They should jointly consider how to develop the standards and principles of international law and the new forms of protection that were necessary in the new environment. For its part, and in accordance with its international obligations, his Government had established a technical interministerial committee in June 1999 to ensure respect for the human rights of displaced persons and had concluded a bilateral agreement with Colombia allowing the voluntary repatriation of displaced persons in complete safety and dignity by establishing a humanitarian corridor on national territory.

5. Ms. HILSBO (Denmark) said that she welcomed the global consultation initiative, on the understanding that the 1951 Convention must be the basis for any new approaches to refugee protection. She agreed with the thematic structure of the consultations as outlined by Ms. Feller. Within the first thematic "circle", the focus should be on how to ensure broader accession to the 1951 Convention and its full implementation. With regard to the second circle, it was important to develop the notion of burden-sharing and to improve registration systems and screening procedures. As to individual asylum-seekers and refugees, consultation should focus on complementary forms of protection, the prevention of the phenomenon of irregular movement, the distinction between those who were in need of international protection and those who could not claim the right of asylum and the identification and prosecution of war criminals and other excludable persons. As far as issues linked to migration were concerned, attention should be given to improving repatriation procedures and UNHCR's role in combating trafficking of irregular migrants. Lastly, with regard to protection-based solutions, the focus should be on developing an integration model that would allow refugees to integrate as quickly as possible into their host countries. It would also be important to address the question of improving the system of collecting refugee data. The task was not an easy one, but it was a necessary one.

6. Mr. VAN KESSEL (Canada) said he believed that the global consultations would provide an excellent opportunity to revisit a number of complex issues, such as those relating to the scope and nature of protection in various situations, the varying interpretations of the Convention and the gaps it contained, and the search for durable solutions for refugees. Canada was proud to be hosting many refugees on its territory; at the same time, however, it continued to face a serious problem of clandestine immigration and was grappling with the need to thwart smugglers and traffickers without denying legitimate refugees and immigrants the right of entry. It therefore welcomed UNHCR's position on interceptions, which formed part of Canada's own policy. Canada also believed that the international community should consider what durable solutions could be proposed to refugees, so that they did not fall into the hands of traffickers in the country of first asylum while trying to reach another country. Another important question was that of costs and cost-sharing. The problem was twofold: on one hand, the majority of refugees were in countries of first asylum whose resources were very limited because, generally speaking, they were developing countries; on the other hand, the developed countries spent considerable amounts on their own asylum systems, including large sums on people who did not in fact need protection. Other points to consider during the consultations were exclusion clauses, an area where Canada was prepared to share its own experience in the search for greater

consistency of interpretation at the international level, and the issue of lack of security in refugee camps. He hoped that the consultations would enable signatory States better to understand their responsibilities.

7. Ms. BEDLINGTON (Australia), emphasizing the various partnerships that made it possible to ensure effective international protection, said that, in the first place, there should be a partnership between States and UNHCR: UNHCR could help States to reduce the costs of their asylum systems by ensuring their effectiveness and could support them in their efforts to combat abuses of refugee status. States, for their part, should provide financial, in-kind and moral support to UNHCR. Another important partnership was the one linking donor States, host countries and UNHCR. Donor States had a right to expect clear objectives and a transparent, effective and responsive system, as well as advice on priority populations. Host countries could expect recognition of their indispensable contribution, but also genuine support from the international community, which should seek durable solutions. For its part, UNHCR deserved a reliable financial base and solid support when resources were lacking. Lastly, UNHCR should also establish partnerships with NGOs, which were an important source of knowledge and could bring new ideas. The proposed global consultations would be a good opportunity to strengthen such partnerships. However, to be effective, the consultations must give all States the opportunity to express their opinion and should focus on concrete topics and not become a mere substitute for action.

8. Mr. SKOGMO (Norway) said that he supported the proposed global consultations on the gaps or deficiencies in the protection system. Although the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol were in no way outdated and should therefore be ratified by all States, they hardly met all current needs. The emergence of new categories of people, who were not covered by the Convention, but had a legitimate claim to protection, and the spread of phenomena such as clandestine immigration and human trafficking had altered the basic elements of the problem. In that regard, he said that, although it was important to combat irregular migration, asylum mechanisms should not be placed under strain; Norway had already begun interpreting the instruments more generously, by granting refugee status to, for example, the victims of sexually-based discrimination or inhuman treatment, which Norway considered amounted to persecution. There was no doubt that it was necessary to find durable solutions, and he commended Mrs. Ogata on her perseverance towards that aim and on her considerable successes, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the resettlement of entire groups, which had been deemed the most appropriate solution in Europe in the wake of the Second World War, now seemed to have been replaced by solutions that were equally durable, but more varied and targeted.

9. Mr. VAN DER HEIJDEN (Netherlands) said that the proposed global consultations should strengthen not only the effectiveness, but also the scope of the international refugee protection regime. To that end, it would be necessary to reconfirm the fundamental role of the Convention, whose contents should not be negotiable, and also to establish how it should be interpreted in areas that it did not directly cover, especially with regard to internally displaced persons fleeing from internal conflicts. Three subjects should be addressed: the concept of internal flight and other protection alternatives; the concept of reception in the region; and the prevention of the situations that caused people to feel obliged to seek protection outside their country of origin. Close attention should also be paid to the organization of the consultations.

10. Mr. PRASAD (India) said that there were many poor countries hosting refugee populations, while the better-off States, which were understandably concerned to safeguard their prosperity, imposed ever stricter conditions on refugees' entry to their territory, to the disapproval of public opinion in the rest of the world. For the burden of caring for refugees to be shared fairly, there would have to be a mobilization of international solidarity with the developing countries, which took in large numbers of refugees despite their limited resources, and UNHCR would have to distribute its own resources more equitably among the various regions of the world, something that had not been done in the past. However, an over-rigorous legalistic approach to international protection was not desirable. India provided generous protection to refugees on its territory despite the fact that it was not a party to the 1951 Convention, which did not, in its opinion, deal with the problem of massive population displacements. Security in refugee camps was primarily the host country's responsibility. UNHCR should pay particular attention to the welfare of the most vulnerable groups - women, children and the elderly - but it could not help internally displaced persons except at the express request of the Secretary-General or of the main competent bodies of the United Nations, and only with the consent of the State concerned, since it was primarily that State's responsibility to protect them. Lastly, he said it was essential to ensure that no partnership UNHCR might enter into would prejudice its status as a non-partisan actor.

11. Mr. HEMAYETUDDIN (Bangladesh) said that he supported the proposal for the holding of global consultations, which should contribute to greater flexibility in the implementation of the asylum regime and help to clarify aspects that were not covered by the 1951 Convention. They would also provide an opportunity to recall that international protection depended on responsibility being shared by all countries, particularly as it was developing countries, which had the fewest resources, that bore the major part of the burden of caring for refugees. Bangladesh, for example, one of the least developed countries, took in a generous share of refugees, even though it was not itself a party to the 1951 Convention. However, achieving genuine solidarity in that area required the development of an appropriate mechanism, since States were currently under no legal obligation to assume their share of the burden.

12. The consultations on international protection would also be an opportunity to recall that refugees and asylum-seekers warranted different treatment from that given to irregular migrants. In the current confusion, some countries seemed more concerned to expose abuses than to fulfil their obligations with regard to protection and tended to humiliate individuals who were in fact entitled to claim international protection.

13. Lastly, he said that the most vulnerable refugees - women, children and the elderly - should be given special protection.

14. Mr. WEISS (Austria) said that he supported the holding of global consultations on international protection and that the exercise should restore the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol to their rightful place and encourage the countries that had not done so to accede to those instruments. The aspects not covered by the Convention should also be addressed in a wide-ranging debate organized under the auspices of UNHCR and involving all the parties concerned, especially IOM, OSCE and the Council of Europe, as well as interested NGOs. His delegation believed that it would be necessary to take the opportunity to clarify the meaning of the expressions "membership of a particular social group" and "safe third country", used in the

relevant instruments, and to consider what action to take in cases of mass population movements, how to coordinate between States in cases where refugees were granted temporary admission to a given territory and what regional solutions might be envisaged to implement the principle of international solidarity.

15. Mr. AL-KAISI (Observer for Iraq) said that the best way to prevent refugee movements was to address their root causes. The time had come to look into the serious consequences of the economic embargo which had been imposed on Iraq by the Security Council and had hit the civilian population hard and triggered the exodus of more than 1 million people. In its excess and cruelty, the implementation of the embargo bordered on genocide. It ran counter to the spirit and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights instruments. It must be lifted so that all the refugees could return home and be reintegrated into society, thereby reducing the burden on UNHCR, donor States and host countries, particularly European countries, which were already much in demand as a result of other crises such as the one in the former Yugoslavia.

16. Mr. BACCAR (Tunisia) denounced the lack of respect for the basic international protection instruments and the selfish arguments that at times resulted in violations of refugees' and asylum-seekers' rights, particularly the rights of the most vulnerable among them. He urged UNHCR to revitalize the international refugee protection regime and to re-establish a global partnership in order to implement that protection. In that regard, States, as concerned parties, should be able to fulfil their responsibilities without forgoing their legitimate interests. In common with other delegations, the Tunisian delegation recommended increasing financial support for international refugee protection and welcomed the global consultation process on the subject.

17. Mr. SUN Changqing (China) said that he wholeheartedly supported the global consultation process aimed at revitalizing the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, which were the legal basis of the international refugee protection regime. The consultations should not concern themselves with the Convention itself, but with finding innovative solutions to the new problems of internal displacement and irregular migration flows. One of the priority issues was the need for sufficient resources to ensure international protection. Considerable resources were being spent on screening asylum-seekers rather than on funding aid to refugees. The developing countries, which took in three quarters of the world's refugees, expected the consultations to lead to an alleviation of their heavy burden. China, as a party to both the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, had always fulfilled its international obligations, for example, by giving the necessary protection to Indochinese refugees in its territory. China was now developing relevant legislation to improve the protection regime and he thanked UNHCR for its help in that regard. Lastly, he said that the best present that could be given to UNHCR on the fiftieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention would be to make the protection regime more effective and more adapted to current conditions.

18. Ms. FELLER (Director, Department of International Protection), responding to delegations' comments, welcomed Governments' recognition of the 1951 Convention as the basis of the refugee protection regime. She was pleased that the majority of delegations had emphasized the importance of the full implementation of the Convention and the need to strengthen the provisions on control. She welcomed the support of countries as diverse as India,

Bangladesh, China, Colombia and Venezuela for the global consultations, whose chief aim, she recalled, was to revitalize the protection regime. It was important that there should be a balanced agenda that reflected all country groups' opinions. In preparing the agenda, therefore, UNHCR wished to take account of all delegations' comments, particularly on gender issues, problems of refugee registration, the capacity to deal with mass flows, the durability of suggested solutions, burden-sharing, etc.

19. She was aware that the process was not risk-free and she believed that it was precisely for that reason that it should focus on protection and not on issues beyond UNHCR's mandate. She agreed with the delegations of Finland, Australia and the Netherlands on the need fully to involve NGOs in the process, as well as such international organizations as ICRC and IOM. A number of delegations had rightly warned against adopting an over-legalistic approach, since there were cases on the ground where protection could be ensured even outside a formal legal framework.

20. In response to the questions asked by a number of delegations, she said that UNHCR would be publishing the reports on the round tables on the interpretation of the Convention and distributing them to all member States, which would be able to use them in their refugee status determination procedures. In that regard, UNHCR had embarked on capacity-building projects in seven countries (Morocco, Niger, Cyprus, Chad, Islamic Republic of Iran, South Africa and Turkey). With regard to the physical safety of refugees, UNHCR had already launched a number of specific activities aimed at improving the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. As to the timetable for the global consultations, an initial organizational meeting was planned for the beginning of December to prepare the agenda and programme for the Executive Committee meetings at which the consultations would be discussed.

21. Lastly, she reaffirmed the importance of the consultation process, whose success would depend on detailed, constructive contributions from each of the member States.

22. Mr. Molander (Sweden), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

REPORTS ON THE WORK OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

(b) PROGRAMME, ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MATTERS (A/AC.96/929, 933 and Add.1, 936, 939, 942 and 943)

23. The CHAIRMAN invited the Executive Committee to consider the work of the Standing Committee on programme, administrative and financial matters, which was reported in detail in paragraphs 4 to 10 of the report on the work of the Standing Committee (A/AC.96/942).

24. He said he took it that the Executive Committee wished to take note of the work of its Standing Committee during the past 12 months and that it was satisfied with its administration of UNHCR's activities and programmes.

25. It was so decided.

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF UNHCR'S ANNUAL PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2001 (agenda item 6) (A/AC.96/932 and Add.1)

26. The CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Executive Committee to consider UNHCR's annual programme budget for 2001 (A/AC.96/932 and Add.1) and drew their attention to table 1.3, which contained the budget approved for 2000 and the draft budget for 2001. The documents had been closely studied by the Standing Committee, whose views had been taken into account in the draft general decision on administrative and financial matters which had been referred to the Executive Committee for adoption.

27. Mr. FAKHOURI (Controller and Director, Division of Resource Management) said that the document dealing with the budget, which was half as long as the one produced for the previous exercise, was the outcome of consultations between UNHCR, the Executive Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). The budget had been drafted on the basis of, and drawing on, a needs analysis carried out in consultation with all partners, governmental and non-governmental. He drew attention to part II of the document, which contained a summary in tabular form giving an overall view of the programme's goals and objectives and measurable indicators of outcomes. With regard to the figures, he pointed out that headquarters expenses accounted for 10 per cent of the total budget and that 4,800 posts were projected for 2001, 85 per cent of them in field offices. He recalled that, at the beginning of the current year, the draft budget had been estimated at US$ 1.1 billion, but, following an internal study and the application of stricter criteria, that figure had been reduced to US$ 935 million and then to US$ 890 million. He believed the last figure was a more accurate and equitable reflection of the requirements for 2001.

28. Mr. HOREKENS (Director, Division of Communication and Information) said that a point of crucial importance was that the adoption of the budget was not an end in itself, but should result in effective funding. The Executive Committee traditionally approved UNHCR's budget without much debate, but funding that budget was a different matter. UNHCR had recently faced a chronic deficiency of fresh resources, a problem exacerbated by the gradual decrease in secondary income and carry-over. UNHCR therefore called on the Executive Committee to give it the indications needed to orient major operational priorities and, at the same time, urged cash donors to give a clear idea of funding prospects for the unified budget. That was vital for the smooth planning and implementation of UNHCR operations.

29. He called on States to make early contribution pledges at the pledging conferences to be held on 10 November in New York and in early December in Geneva in conjunction with the launch of the 2001 Global Appeal. A high level of firm pledges before the beginning of the programme year was essential for the appropriation of resources for the first quarter of the year; without that, and particularly with the expected low carry-over, UNHCR would not be able to pursue its operational activities. He also asked for a concerted effort on the part of cash donors to plan their additional contributions progressively throughout the year, in line with the periodicity of UNHCR's quarterly allocation of resources. UNHCR would like to be able to establish a clear and predictable funding plan for 2001 that would take account of its own needs and donors' specific opportunities and constraints.

30. Mr. SKOGMO (Norway) said that the Nordic countries had always given strong political and financial support to UNHCR's work and were its second largest donor. He acknowledged the important contributions also made by developing countries that hosted large refugee populations.

31. The Nordic countries were convinced that the unified budget was an important step forward, as it provided a transparent and more comprehensive picture of UNHCR's activities. It allowed a more strategic management process and gave the High Commissioner greater flexibility to use available funds. The Nordic countries were glad to see that the unified budget had not led to a higher level of earmarking. They also believed that a biennial programme planning cycle might be more appropriate.

32. The Nordic countries were very concerned to note that, despite the efforts to establish a more realistic budget, UNHCR had been forced to cut its programmes due to inadequate funding. Member States had a responsibility to fund UNHCR and it was necessary to find mechanisms to ensure a better link between the adoption of the budget and the payment of contributions, which needed to be predictable and stable if UNHCR was to have the flexibility to implement its mandate. The Nordic countries also believed that UNHCR should make greater efforts to broaden its donor base and that there was scope for a number of countries to increase their contributions.

33. Priority setting was an essential element of a budgeting process and should be part of the overall strategy. UNHCR should clarify to donors the consequences of the budget deficit for refugees and limit as far as possible the impact of any budget cuts.

34. The Nordic countries commended UNHCR for presenting an annual programme budget that was concise, clear, easy to read and more realistic. They would, however, like greater attention to be paid to the emergency preparedness and response capacity, security arrangements for staff and refugees, and evaluation. They believed UNHCR should focus on its core activities and try, as far as possible, to engage other actors in the implementation of tasks. Lastly, they welcomed the continued dialogue with UNHCR on budgeting and financial matters.

35. Ms. DRADIE (Italy) commended UNHCR on having submitted a clear and useful detailed annual programme budget, which confirmed that the idea of a unified budget had been a good one. She paid tribute to UNHCR's constant efforts to improve transparency, accountability and information to donors and drew attention to the comments made in the report of ACABQ (A/AC.96/932/Add.1). She also expressed satisfaction with the Mid-year Progress Report, which enabled donors to monitor UNHCR work better and to improve their financial planning.

36. With regard to the global programmes, she encouraged UNHCR to continue to mainstream refugee women's issues, gender equality and children's rights in its protection and assistance programmes. She thanked UNHCR for the updated information it had provided on the living conditions of refugee women and children. As already mentioned by a number of delegations, the physical security of refugee women and children was a crucial aspect, whatever their situation. The issue was a complex one and it was primarily up to countries to ensure refugees' safety, but she encouraged UNHCR to step up its advocacy and protection activities and to seek closer cooperation with the competent national authorities and social institutions.

Her delegation recommended that refugee women should be fully involved in the design and implementation of measures that might enhance their own safety and that of their children. Women's direct participation guaranteed the success of any action to help them or the population as a whole.

37. Mr. McGILL (Canada) said that he welcomed the structure of the unified budget, which better reflected the activities of UNHCR. The new format of the presentation of the country programmes and the anticipated results for 2001 demonstrated UNHCR's commitment to keep donors better informed about the effectiveness of its activities. It was essential that UNHCR should continue to publish the results achieved with the resources allocated to each programme. His delegation recommended that UNHCR should adopt a multi-year strategic planning approach, which would enable it to focus more closely on its priorities. Canada also welcomed the proposed informal consultations to discuss the funding of programmes and the development of the 2002 budget. He hoped that they would address issues of particular concern, such as the allocation of funds and the establishment of priorities. For example, the security of refugee camps and of personnel was a very high priority for UNHCR, but it was seriously underfunded.

38. His delegation was concerned that gender mainstreaming had not been given sufficient priority in the 2001 annual programme budget. In addition, it was deeply concerned about the lack of human and financial resources allocated to the implementation of UNHCR's gender policy. It encouraged UNHCR to proceed as soon as possible with the joint field assessment of the implementation of UNHCR's guidelines on the protection of women. It was regrettable that the special adviser on gender issues had been appointed for only one year: his delegation would like a five-year strategy to be developed and the Executive Committee to be regularly informed on progress in that area.

39. While recognizing the improvements that had been made with regard to evaluation, his delegation urged UNHCR to put in place an evaluation function that would also include activities related to the dissemination of evaluation results and their further use in the planning and budgeting cycle. It believed the level of resources allocated to evaluation in the 2001 programme budget were insufficient and would like resources allocated to research and documentation to be increased to 0.5 per cent of the programme budget in 2002. Lastly, Canada proposed that the informal consultations initiated in July 1999 on UNHCR's performance review framework should be resumed as soon as possible.

40. Ms. GILLIES (Australia) said she was pleased that UNHCR had submitted a more concise, more comprehensible and more useful programme budget. However, that would not be enough to solve the problem of funding the budget. Donors must also be convinced that UNHCR's programme focused on the right priorities and would be delivered efficiently.

41. Her delegation believed that the budget could still be improved. It should be more strategic - that was to say, it should be based on the careful consideration of UNHCR's core functions and objectives, partly through multi-year planning. It should articulate clear objectives, set out a strategy for achieving those objectives and include performance indicators, as it already did at the country level. It should also incorporate adequate allocations for central

management functions such as strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, emergency preparedness, coordination, security and exit strategies. It should be better coordinated with the activities of other humanitarian and development agencies and should identify the responsibilities of each. It should be more equitable - that was to say, it should ensure that all people of concern to UNHCR received a similar level of service. A budget combining all those attributes would be more achievable.

42. Donors must also play their part by displaying more confidence in UNHCR; they should allow it greater flexibility by earmarking fewer contributions. Lastly, she said that Australia supported the recommendation for informal consultations in preparation for the 2002 budget.

43. Mr. HUNTER (United States of America) said he welcomed the 2001 programme budget, but was dismayed to see that UNHCR once again faced a significant shortfall in funding for 2000. He emphasized the need to provide UNHCR with the funding needed to do its job, particularly with regard to emergency preparedness, response and coordination. He endorsed Mr. Horekens' proposal on the timetable for pledges. The United States appealed to other donors to ensure that UNHCR entered 2001 in sound financial health.

44. It was important to deal with the question of donors' ability to fund the budget they had approved. In that regard, he regretted the decline of European Commission funding in 2000, but was pleased to hear that steps had been taken to reverse that trend. If UNHCR still faced a budget shortfall in 2001, it would be necessary to ensure that priority was given to its core functions. For other activities, UNHCR should reach an agreement with other agencies. When UNHCR was given responsibility for internally displaced persons, extrabudgetary sources of funding must be identified. Mechanisms to address new priorities should be put in place.

45. He welcomed the continuing consultations between UNHCR and member States on budgetary matters and supported strategic budget consultations for 2002 and continuing Standing Committee oversight for 2001.

46. Mr. TAKASU (Japan) said that, although the unified budget had made it possible to increase transparency, allocate funds more flexibly and reduce contributions, the problem of the gap between funding requirements and donors' contributions remained. Since 98 per cent of UNHCR's budget was funded from voluntary contributions, the problem was inevitable, but it could be alleviated through increased coordination among donors. His delegation believed that it was extremely important to solve the shortfall problem. He wondered what would happen when the 2001 programme budget had been adopted, after what had happened in 2000, when Japan had increased its own contribution significantly. While it was important to discuss strategic considerations, improving prioritization should not be merely a matter of cutting the budget. It would also be very useful if the member States of the Executive Committee could be involved at an earlier stage in the preparation of the budget. Lastly, his delegation requested clarifications on the cost of enhancing personnel security. Would it be possible to finance security expenditure out of the 2000 programme budget or would additional funding be required?

47. Ms. DUCHENE (France) said that she welcomed the new format of the budget, which was more user-friendly, but would have liked to see a region-by-region analysis of programmes. She requested details on security expenditure. She acknowledged that 2000 had been a difficult year in terms of funding for UNHCR. France would be donating 3 million francs to UNHCR for its operation in Guinea. As to the European Commission's contribution, she said the European Union member States were making every effort to improve the situation, but it was not easy to obtain Community funds when there was no evident crisis, such as the one in Kosovo. A certain amount of headway had been made to date, but her delegation believed that engagement in strategic dialogue with the European Commission would help improve understanding and facilitate the release of funding. She therefore welcomed the dialogue between UNHCR and the member States on the budget and operations.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.